

Uncomfortable with calling drawing or painting my artistic niche, I struggled to find a medium that spoke to me. I had long questioned my abilities and desire to remain an artist, but leaving my comfort zone and exploring a new medium finally unearthed new dreams and passion to create art. The world of costuming renewed the addictive thrill of the creative process within me, and while the expanse of characters, fabric, and materials initially seemed overwhelming, hours of research only fed my creative hunger even more. After intensive investigation, I discovered a love for working with thermo-plastics such as Worbla and Wonderflex to build custom armor. Experimenting with unknown materials was exuberating. I selected my subject – Lightning from Final Fantasy XIII-2 – because I admired the character’s personality. Though the Square Enix Corporation created and designed Lightning, I created my armor independent of their influence and without any communication with Square Enix whatsoever. Wishing to become stronger and bolder, projecting Lightning’s strength temporarily transformed me into someone I’ve always aspired to be. When wearing the Lightning costume to anime conventions, I feel empowered and comforted to know that people appreciate the time and effort I have put into my armor. It also frequently works as an ice breaker for me when attempting to make friends. The presence of the armor, as seen in photos by Dim Horizon Studio (with whom I’m not affiliated), reassures me that I still possess the artistic drive that was dormant so long. The part of me that feared judgment and criticism has diminished and I am now emotionally and psychologically stronger than ever before